

Toward an
Understanding of
JAPAN



NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON AMERICAN
JAPANESE RELATIONS
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Japan's Attitude Towards the Exclusion Act

It is nearly three years since the passage of the Immigration Law with the clause excluding from the United States all "aliens ineligible to citizenship," a diplomatic phrase which in its working out is discriminatory against Japanese subjects.

The popular view in this country holds that the question is settled and that the Japanese, who were so humiliated at the time, have now acquiesced. But addressing the Imperial Diet in January, 1927, Baron Shidehara, the Japanese Foreign Minister, said, "I regret that the question of discriminatory treatment involved in the United States Immigration Act of 1924 remains unadjusted.

"I have nothing to say at present that would modify or supplement the observations I have made on many previous occasions, but to point out the evident welcome fact that on this, and all matters of common interest, the true knowledge and sympathetic understanding of Japan have grown considerably in the United States in recent years, and that the wild reports circulated at one time discrediting Japan's pacific intentions now are receiving the general condemnation of an enlightened public opinion there.

"In our turn, for the correct estimation of the question, we should also fully appreciate the national institutions and conditions which characterize the United States.

"A mutual understanding is the first essential step for the settlement of all international questions, and I am firmly convinced that the two nations, conscious of their important missions of guardians of the peace of the Pacific, will stand side by side for all time in friendly accord for the fulfillment of such responsibilities."

Thus the Foreign Minister of Japan, although warning the people of the United States that Japan has not forgotten, assures them that

Japan will wait patiently for the two nations to arrive at a mutual understanding of each other's problems.

Japan's Economic Necessity

Do we in this country realize Japan's true position? Do we comprehend the valiant struggle she is making to meet the ever enlarging needs of an ever increasing population and yet to keep peace with a world that excludes her subjects from its territory?

Japan is restricted from sending her nationals to the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand; she cannot colonize or own land in the Philippines; she cannot own land outside of treaty ports in China; Russia opposes her advance in Siberia; and the whole world looks with suspicion upon her activities in Manchuria. Japan faces this dilemma—she must either fight for a larger place in the world or find some other way of supporting her surplus population.

She has chosen the way of peace. With her back to the wall, handieapped by the financial consequences of the terrible earthquake disaster which destroyed her most prosperous cities, by the high American tariff, by commerce-destroying political turmoil in China, and by the world economic aftermath of the war, she is struggling to develop the one peaceful means through which she can hope to take care of her population at home—industrial expansion.

Japan's agricultural resources are not adequate. On an area smaller than the state of California, only 14.6% of which can be cultivated, she must support a population equal to one half that of the United States. A former member of the House of Peers, Count Soyeshima, says:—"Supposing that all the farms in Japan are put into one large farm, it can be crossed in a Ford car from one end to the other in about five hours. And from this tiny space our industrious peasants do their utmost to feed fifty-six million people." It is to industry then that Japan must turn. Her factories are therefore working day and night on two shifts and she has organized her industries scientifically in order to keep her head above water.

Japan's Immediate Problems

The two main problems which she faces are where to secure the raw materials which she lacks, and where to find markets. The essentials for modern industry are not found within her boundaries. She needs coal, iron, oil, cotton and rubber. She does not grow enough rice to sustain her people. Rice production reached its maximum in 1920 and the price of rice, the staple food of the Japanese people, is rising year by year. If it were not for the fact that the South Manchurian Railway is run by the Japanese, there might have been a yet more serious food problem in Japan.

Japan's chief anxiety lies in the fear of discriminatory tariffs. It is a fear that is not unfounded, because she has had the experience of having her tobacco trade with Egypt, which it had taken her some years to build, wiped out by the stroke of the pen when prohibitive duties were placed upon Chinese and Japanese tobacco. The editor of the Far Eastern Review makes this statement: "The principle of the Open Door to trade is vital to the continued peaceful existence of Japan. Deny to her these rights by the imposition of discriminatory duties on her manufactured goods and Japan goes under."

Japan's Foreign Policy

Japan's ambition is to be friendly both to Asia and to the West; the "guardian of the peace of the Pacific." That an Asiatic League, pitting the yellow races against the white races, is far from her desire, is shown by the repeated assertions of her officials that Japan stands for world cooperation. She is taking an active part in the League of Nations and the name of the new Emperor's new era is "Showa," or "Enlightened Peace."

Before and during the war, it is not surprising that Japan reflected the world's imperialism. She saw England, France, Germany and Russia gaining spheres of influence at her very door, in China. She saw the United States annex Hawaii and take an unrelaxing hold on the Philippines. In self defense she too reached out her hand for land and trade. Led by military officials, her militant policy culminated in the Twenty-one Demands on China,—

which brought upon her the condemnation of the whole world,—and Japan found herself launched upon a policy which was alienating her from Asia and from the West.

But Japan's leaders have had the intelligence and the courage to adapt their policies to the spirit of the New Day, the watchwords of which are "conciliation, arbitration and international law." Ever since the world war, and more particularly since the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armament, Japan's militant policies have been changing. She has given back Shantung to China, evacuated Siberia, replaced a military with a civilian government in Korea, and proclaimed her intention not to interfere in China's domestic affairs.

Light is thrown on Japan's former military policies by a study of her history. For many centuries there was a dual government in Japan. The Emporer, the legal head, remained in the seclusion of his Kyoto palace while the Shogun with the military nobility governed the country. The theory has been advanced that, although the Shogunate was abolished, the hold of the military group continued. Their control could be plainly seen in the years preceding the Great War, in the militaristic program of the General Staff, which did not have to be submitted to the Imperial Diet. But the policy of the Foreign Office differed from that of the General Staff and showed itself in a desire to "promote the peace of the Orient." Thus, a sort of dual government was continued and these two opposing political forces would explain the conflicting policies in China, Korea and Siberia that earned for Japan the mistrust and suspicion of the nations.

However that may be, liberal forces are clearly making headway in Japan, as evidenced by a changed front. With the granting of universal manhood suffrage (1925), after three stages of successive enlargement, democracy has taken firm root in Japan, and we may look for the strengthening of the liberal movement.

American-Japanese Relations

How will the people of the United States respond to Japan's struggle for an honorable and peaceful existence? Jingoists and alarmists will always distort and cloud the true meaning

of every move that Japan makes. This renders it all the more imperative that American citizens realize why Japan must make every effort to obtain in China, in Russian territory, or wherever possible, materials for her industries, and also to secure ever increasing markets for her manufactured products. A sympathetic understanding of Japan's necessities will go far toward restoring the old friendly relations.

Japan understands that the United States cannot introduce another race problem into our country and acknowledges that every nation has a right to say who may come into its territory. But what Japan wants is honorable and friendly cooperation, as among equals, which cannot exist as long as discriminatory measures place her before the world on a basis of inequality.

With goodwill on both sides, there is nothing in the relations of the two countries that cannot be adjusted peacefully. Are the American people ready to "stand side by side for all time in friendly accord" with Japan to solve together the problems, social, economic and international, that a steadily shrinking world is bringing to the fore?